

Research Matters

Return to Learn After Traumatic Brain Injury

WHY IS RETURN TO LEARN AFTER TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY IMPORTANT?

Returning to learn (RTL) after a traumatic brain injury (TBI) is important in the recovery and functional outcomes for students. Early RTL after sustaining a brain injury can offer critical benefits for students regardless of the severity.

ABOUT THIS ARTICLE

Authors Diciaro et al. (2023) provided background information about TBI to include prevalence, and significance of mechanism and severity of the injury. Educational law and available supports were briefly discussed, differentiating laws (Rehabilitation Act; Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)) and types of support to include accommodations, modifications, and interventions. Authors included multiple charts referencing TBI symptoms and corresponding school adjustments.

KEY FINDINGS

Available avenues of school support were reviewed. These supports vary in requirements and intensity.

- **Informal Supports**
 - Often called “Concussion Protocol”; “Informal School Adjustments”
- **Formal Supports**
 - 504 Plan: For students with lasting disability who require accommodations. Applies at any age. Includes an eligibility process determining impairment of a substantial major life activity due to the disability.
 - Individualized Education Plan (IEP): For students with lasting disability who require modifications, intervention (and accommodations). Applies to ages 3-21.

STUDY IMPLICATIONS

- Informal supports are often sufficient in supporting students who have sustained a mild TBI.
- Formal supports such as a 504 Plan or IEP are often needed in supporting students after a moderate or severe TBI.
- Close monitoring, assessment and flexible supports are important in supporting students in the school setting.

REFERENCE

Diciaro, M., Baker, D., & Tlustos, S. J. (2023). Return to learn after traumatic brain injury. *Pediatric Clinics of North America*, 70(3), 445–460.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pcl.2023.01.004>